

NEW JERSEY MILITIA

____ P.O. BOX 10176, TRENTON, NJ 08650 ____

Sheriff Armando Fontoura

Essex County Courts Building

Newark, NJ 07102 October 14, 1997

Dear Sheriff Fontoura,

We are contacting you, the only elected peace officer in Essex County, to seek your help in keeping military equipment, armored vehicles in particular, out of the hands of police in your jurisdiction.

As you know the U.S. Department of Defense has brazenly and unconstitutionally offered the city of Newark a military tank like the ones used at Waco, Texas, where more than eighty innocent people perished at the hands of federal police. In a brutal paramilitary attack the FBI used armored vehicles to punch holes in the Branch Davidians' church and living quarters. They struck before daylight while the unfortunates' kerosene lanterns were still lit (all utilities having been cut off), and pumped in CS gas (banned by the Geneva Convention) which, when ignited by the open flame of the lanterns, created a fireball of cyanide gas. The entire chilling and grisly episode is recounted in *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*, which is based on government video and forward looking infrared (FLIR) footage obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

The point is that there would undoubtedly have been a peaceful resolution to the standoff had the sheriff of McLellan County not been brushed aside by police who had access to military hardware and training.--This is not to say that the sheriff should have access either.

Waco was a black day for America. We hope you agree that we do not want a recurrence anywhere in New Jersey. For the record we do not suggest that the Newark police would ever engage in such an operation, but we never believed that the FBI would either. The militarization of the police must cease.

As you know the framers established a system in which the sheriff--elected by and accountable to the people--is to maintain order in the county. That is still his responsibility. If things get out of hand he has the authority to call on the citizenry to assist him. The citizenry, of course, are residents of the county. They can bring a sense of justice and moderation to keeping the peace. In case of rebellion or insurrection the governor has the authority to call out the militia, as does the President.

This matter is far too important to let sit in a file drawer. Therefore a delegation from the New Jersey Militia respectfully seeks to meet with you. Please contact Bob Figueroa at your earliest convenience. He can be reached by phone (609/695-2733) or fax (695-0790).

Very truly yours,

/Signed/

For the New Jersey Militia

Incl

cc Mayor of Newark, Newark City Council, Essex County Freeholders, Sheriffs' Association of New Jersey,
Editor, Newark *Star Ledger*, New Jersey Congressional Delegation

Office of the Sheriff

Armando B. Fontoura, Sheriff

Essex County Courts Building

Newark, New Jersey 07102 November 17, 1997

Dear Mr. Figueroa,

Thank you for your organization's recent letter, regarding police acquisition of surplus vehicles owned by the federal government.

While this agency already has an armored vehicle in its fleet, we have no intention of procuring a vehicle similar to the one which recently considered by the Newark Police Department and rejected by the City Council. This being the case, a meeting to discuss this matter would be moot.

Once again, thank you for the New Jersey Militia's views on this matter.

Sincerely,

Armando B. Fontoura

Essex County Sheriff